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471 which, in the interest of efficiency, has evolved centralized control of labour
592 and means of production on a comparatively large scale, comes closer than
474 any other Nupe craft to the principle of the modern factory system.

323 We have already seen that in the group at large, i.e. in the glass-
workers' guild, a similar intensive co-operation obtains. Its organization
467 falls to the guild-head, who assigns the different tasks to the various
workshops and is responsible for the general planning of production.
This planning must take into account the varying conditions of the
market, and we find, in fact, that the guild-head, without interfering with
the commercial transactions of the individual workshop, regularly con-
sults traders and middlemen who visit the *masagd* quarter, and maps out
accordingly the scheme of work for his community. On my many visits to
the *masagd* I found that the guild-head could always tell me what kind
of work was carried out in the various workshops, or when a particular
workshop would start on a new task. The guild-head, who styles him-
self *Masagd*, has his own workshop, where his sons and brothers are
working. He does not often work there himself, but certain difficult
tasks, such as the making of very big, heavy bangles, which fetch the
highest price, he alone can perform. The guild-head assists his co-
workers with advice and practical help, also with small loans of money for
the purchase of raw material or fuel; he arbitrates in internal quarrels,
and he is, like all Nupe guild-heads, the accredited representative of his
guild at the Nupe court.

[567] The ever-expanding business of the Bida glass industry involves an
almost permanent need of new labour. Formerly the glass-workers
bought slaves and trained them in the craft in order to enlarge their
machinery of production. To-day they are regularly accepting appren-
tices. In 1936 five young men were being trained as glass-workers. An
apprentice applies to the guild-head, who will then place him in charge
of a certain workshop. The training is calculated to take three years,
during which time the apprentices continue to live in their own homes
and come to the *masagd* quarter only to work. But when their apprentice-
ship is completed they not only move into the *masagd* quarter, but are
expected to marry *masagd* women (as did also the slaves in former days).
[602] This adoption into the kinship group is considered essential and is as
much a qualification for the practice of the craft as is the technical train-
ing itself. Thus the monopoly of the glass-workers is kept intact, and no
new branches can be established outside their organization. Kinship
interests and kinship co-operation are enlisted in the service of profes-
sional co-operation and solidarity and in maintaining the continuity of
a highly specialized, monopolized and almost secret, technique of
production. Economic interests, in turn, are seen to be sufficiently
powerful to effect a radical adjustment in the kinship structure, and to
create, in a patrilineal society, a matrilineal enclave.

WEAVERS

- 288 The weavers, called *edelučisi*, present another instance of the tripar-
tite organization of Bida crafts. Each of the three *ekpa* of the town
467 harbours one of the three guild sections of the weavers. However,
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according to Nupe tradition, weaving was not originally a guild-organized craft, but a free profession carried out individually, like mat-weaving, for example, to-day. It became a 'closed profession' and a guild-organized craft when the Nupe kings imported craftsmen from the south, who brought with them their own special technique and who, aliens in Nupe country, kept to themselves, neither intermarrying nor coming much in contact with the rest of the population. These imported groups of weavers were *koni*, freed slaves of war. They form two of the three groups of weavers which we find in Bida to-day. The first is composed of people from Salu, a town in Yagba country, who were settled in Bida by *Etsu* Masaba. The members of this group, which is the largest of the three weaver guilds, live scattered over the whole town; their guild-head, however, used to reside in the *Etsu* Masaba quarter. The second *koni* group is of Yoruba extraction, and is concentrated in the *Etsu* Usman quarter. This group has representatives also outside Bida, in a number of Nupe villages: Kutigi, Enagi, Sakpe, and Dabbā. The third group of weavers, in the *Etsu* Umaru quarter, is a very small group, consisting only of one compound. This Nupe group of weavers forms a section of a large kinship group which comprises farmers, who live outside Bida, as well. They trace their profession to a man who came to Bida from Rabā, as a *bara* of *Etsu* Umaru. Originally a warrior, this man later settled in the town and learned weaving from a *koni* craftsman. At that time, I was told, weaving was a lucrative and highly respected profession. Weaving has been the profession of his family for three generations now, and the family heads are received at the court and treated as official representatives of their group like all heads of guilds or guild sections. Small groups of weavers of Nupe extraction are also found in various villages in the Emirate. Their labour organization closely resembles that of this last group of weavers, but they remain outside the Bida guild system.

The technique of weaving is the same in all groups. Their loom is of the narrow upright type, worked with pedals, which is common all over Northern Nigeria. These looms produce narrow strips of cloth 5 inches wide. The looms are placed in a half-open shed, six to seven in one row, in the inner courtyard of the compound, each loom being worked by one man. The weavers have to buy a large proportion of their tools from other craftsmen: the shuttle and the wooden posts on which the loom rests, and which are frequently beautifully carved and painted, are made by the carpenters; the iron rods used as pedals and the iron bar upon which the finished strips of cloth are wound, are made by the blacksmiths. Only the weaver's reed is produced by the weavers themselves. A complete outfit for one man costs from 6s. to 12s., according to whether cheap plain or expensive carved wooden posts are used. The Bida weavers use mostly thread of European manufacture, both plain and coloured, and only very rarely native-ginned and -dyed cotton. The village weavers use mostly the latter kind.

The men who occupy a common workshop are members of the same family and household group. In one house, for example, I found

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288 thirteen looms, of which only ten were actually used, as the family
 592 numbered at that time only ten adult men. The individualistic nature
 of this work, however, in which no actual working together of several
 individuals is involved, is reflected in the restricted *efakó* arrangement,
 which comprises only a man and his young, as yet unmarried, sons. As
 soon as the sons are married, they work on their own, although they may
 continue to use the looms and tools which the family head had allotted
 to them when they were still working in the *efakó* group. The *efakó* head
 also supplies them with cotton thread for the start. When they are
 fairly launched on their new individual work they have to buy their own
 raw material from the proceeds of their work. Only the looms are still
 regarded as family property, and are kept in repair or replaced if neces-
 sary by the head of the household. In this case the individual worker
 [427] pays the family head a regular 'rent' (called *lada*, lit. wages) of 2d. in
 every 3s. which he earns with his work—an arrangement which clearly
 takes into account the high cost of new looms. This arrangement, how-
 ever, has been dropped; the young workers make themselves responsible
 for the cost of repairs or the purchase of their means of production, and
 the family head only receives occasional presents of food and clothing.
 In a number of cases I found the *efakó*-unit still further reduced, and
 even unmarried sons working on their own as soon as they reached the
 age when tax had to be paid for them. The difficulty which many family
 heads have to-day in providing tax money for a large family explains this
 disintegration of the labour-unit. The steadily declining demand for
 native woven cloth has been the main cause. In many houses looms
 stand unused, because weaving is no longer profitable, and young men,
 released from the *efakó*-unit, use their newly won leisure to turn at least
 temporarily to other, more lucrative, professions. In one weaver's family
 one of the three sons had given up weaving and become a messenger
 in the District Office; in another family, two of the six sons became
 [357] servants in houses of Europeans, and only one of the two returned to his
 old profession after a number of years, having collected enough money
 for his bride-price and for a new start in his former profession.

286 The individual weaver is free to plan his work independently, and
 there are a number of different methods which he can adopt. The long
 [804] narrow strips of cloth which the Nupe looms produce are always woven
 to a standard length of ten *kperé*, i.e. arm's lengths, the weaving of which
 takes five days. The most expensive, striped, cloth is then cut into five
 strips of two *kperé* each and sewn together, edge to edge, to form the
 complete *ede*, cloth, of the kind worn by women round the waist or as
 kerchiefs over the head. It is reckoned that one man can produce three
 to four lengths every month. The Nupe weavers work every day except
 443 Friday, but much time is taken up in getting the cloth sold. A weaver
 can entrust his goods to one of the brokers who have their shops on the
 Bida night market; but nowadays this means a long wait—even if one is
 lucky enough to get the cloth sold at all. Many younger men prefer
 therefore to do their own trading, and wander through the villages, often
 for three or five days, selling their cloth in village markets where there is
 less competition both in native-made and European goods. One piece of

One piece of

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cloth of this expensive kind is sold for 4s. 6d.; as the cost of the material is 3s. 4d., the profit made in five days' work is 1s. 2d., or just under 3d. a day. If cheaper, plain material is used the profit is slightly smaller; the cost of the material for one piece of cloth is 1s. 6d., and the cloth is sold for 2s. 6d., six pieces being again produced each month, which gives a profit of 1s. per cloth, or 2d. a day. But instead of cutting up and sewing together the cloth in form of the *ede*, the weaver can also sell the full-length cloth as such to the cap-makers, or, better still, can make it into caps himself. A weaver can produce one cap (made of one *kper*e of cloth) each day, that is, twenty caps a month, allowing for two intervals of five days each for the weaving of the cloth. The white cloth caps, called *fula*, are very popular in Bida and are sold at prices from 9d. to 1s.; the cost of the material being 6s. 8d. the profit on twenty caps is thus between 7s. and 12s., or from 3d. to 5d. a day. It is interesting to note that this last kind of work, although more profitable and also in much greater demand, is nevertheless regarded as a slightly degrading occupation. *Fula* making, my informants pointed out, is tailor's work, and not the proper work for trained weavers; they undertake it, as they frankly admit, only in order to obtain money for tax or bride-price. In this respect, then, the dissolution of the *efakó*-unit offers another benefit to the young members of the group who are out for quick money: for, relieved of their duties towards the head of the group, they are also relieved of their duties towards the ethical standards of the profession, to which the older men still cling.

In the villages only cheaper qualities of cloth, mostly native-dyed cloth, are produced; striped cloth which is sold for 1s. 3d., the material costing 9d. and the dye 3d., and plain indigo-dyed cloth (a kind of cloth that would find no buyers in Bida), sold for 1s. 9d., and produced at a cost of 1s. 3d. But even when the village weavers produce the same kind of cloth as the Bida craftsmen, they sell it cheaper, being content with a smaller profit. Thus striped cloth of the kind sold in Bida for 2s. 6d. is produced by the village artisan for 2s., allowing a profit of 9d. instead of 1s. 2d. On the other hand, the work and material of the village weavers are known to be inferior to that of the Bida craftsmen. The village weavers frankly admit it. They use the cruder indigenous dye instead of European dyes, they gin their own cotton and work with this inferior cotton-thread which breaks frequently during the weaving. They take ten days for the weaving of a piece of cloth which the Bida craftsmen finish in five. But just because they limit themselves to this cheaper and cruder material and cater exclusively for the less wealthy customers, they can stand the competition of European cloth better than the Bida weavers, who have specialized in more ambitious and expensive work. Here are the comparative prices: a striped cloth of European (or Japanese) manufacture is sold in Bida for 5s., as against 4s. 6d. for Bida-woven cloth and 1s. 3d. for cloth produced in the village.

Formerly, when the *efakó* system in weaving was still capable of supporting a whole family, the younger members of the *efakó* group practised a little farm-work as *bucd*. The family head did not join in this additional work and often, if he was an old man, he did not even take part in actual weaving. His income was supplemented by training

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● 288 apprentices. This source of income, formerly quite considerable, disappeared when weaving became less profitable. Young boys of about 592 10 years, mostly sons of farmers, were the pupils; they stayed with the weaver for from four to five years, and the work which they produced 467 during the time of their apprenticeship belonged to their master; when their training was completed the parents of the pupil would bring one bundle of corn as payment.

288 The loose organization of the labour-unit has its counterpart in the organization of the profession at large. Among the weavers no co-operation 467 on a larger scale exists. We have even seen that individuals are quite ready to abandon the profession for other, more attractive, work—an attitude unprecedented among blacksmiths or glass-workers. Yet the symbols of guild organization, the guild ranks, are still preserved. Each group of weavers has its titled guild-head: the head of the Salu (Yagba) weavers is called *Maji*, and the head of the Yoruba weavers *Leshe*. He is also regarded as the head of all *komí* weavers in Nupe, and used to receive from them small annual gifts or tributes. But this common allegiance and co-operation reflects less the professional union than the tribal and cultural unity of these scattered Yoruba groups in Nupe country. The head of the Nupe group of weavers in Bida has no official title but is called simply *Ndakó*, Grandfather. The position of the group-head carries to-day none of the influence and authority which characterizes the guild-heads of other crafts; he neither receives gifts from the fellow craftsmen nor is he expected to advise or help them in their work. As in all other guild-organized crafts the official position of the guild-heads of the weavers was based originally on their role as intermediaries between the king and the craftsmen of Bida. But this role has lost very early all practical importance—earlier than it did in the other Nupe crafts. To quote the guild-head of the Yagba weavers: '*Etsu* Masaba still used to come to our workshops and order cloth personally from the *Maji*. But *Etsu* Umaru, who came after him, already bought what he needed on the market, and so did all the later kings of Nupe.'

BEADWORKERS

306 As a last example of guild-organized industries I will describe the organization of the beadworkers in Bida. Their craft shows certain specific features which make it specially interesting and distinguish it from the other crafts of Nupe. Beadworking represents, first of all, a typical refining industry, which involves a system of re-exportation comparable only to the most complex forms of economic enterprise found in Western civilization. It involves further the use of money capital and credit operations on a scale unparalleled in Nupe industry. It is, finally, a pure luxury industry, producing more expensive goods than either glass- or brass-work. These various factors have contributed to making the beadworking industry of Bida extremely vulnerable; it has suffered more than the other crafts from the economic stress of the recent years and, a significant result of this, presents the picture of a complete disintegration of co-operative production.